NCA
VOC FOR IOP/FN
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ANITA CHAPMAN

NO MORE GROWTH FOR AMERICANS

ANNCR:

THE NATIONAL CENTER FOR HEALTH STATISTICS ISSUED A REPORT TODAY (THURSDAY) THAT WILL HELP PHYSICIANS AND OTHERS DETECT ILLNESSES THAT MAY BE STUNTING GROWTH IN CHILDREN. AN INTERESTING FACT EMERGES FROM THE REPORT, AS WE HEAR NOW FROM ANITA CHAPMAN:

VOICE:

WHEN AMERICAN CHILDREN ARE TAKEN FOR MEDICAL CHECK-UPS, THEIR MOTHERS RUSH TO COMPARE THEIR HEIGHT AND WEIGHT WITH THOSE OF THE AVERAGE CHILD, AS SHOWN ON A WALL CHART IN THE DOCTOR'S OFFICE. NOW THESE CHARTS ARE BEING UPDATED TO REFLECT CHANGES FOUND IN A NEW STUDY CONDUCTED BY DOCTORS, ANTHROPOLOGISTS AND STATISTICIANS.

THE STARTLING CONCLUSION REACHED BY THE STUDY GROUP IS THAT AMERICANS HAVE STOPPED GROWING. FOR NEARLY A CENTURY EACH NEW GENERATION HAS BEEN TALLER AND HEAVIER THAN THE PREVIOUS. NOW, THE DOCTORS SUGGEST, THE GENETIC POTENTIAL MAY HAVE BEEN REACHED. THIS MEANS EVERYTHING HAS BEEN SHAKEN OUT OF THE GENETIC BASKET AS FAR AS PHYSICAL GROWTH IS CONCERNED.

AMERICANS GREW AN AVERAGE OF TEN CENTIMETERS IN THE PAST CENTURY, NOTICEABLE IN THE LARGE CLOTHING AND SHOE SIZES, AND VISIBLE TO THE FATHER WHO FOUND HIMSELF LOOKING UP AT HIS FOURTEEN YEAR OLD SON. IT WAS ALSO NOTICEABLE TO EACH NEW WAVE OF IMMIGRANTS, WHOSE CHILDREN PICKED UP NOT ONLY AMERICAN SLANG BUT THE TENDENCY TO OUTGROW THEIR ANCESTORS.

THE EXPERTS ATTRIBUTE THE CENTURY OF GROWTH TO SEVERAL ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS. ONE WAS THE AVAILABILITY OF GOOD FOOD. ANOTHER WAS PUBLIC HEALTH MEASURES THAT INSURED DRINKING WATER

FREE OF WATER-BORNE DISEASES. THEN MANY OF THE GROWTH-RETARDING DISEASES OF CHILDHOOD WERE ELIMINATED DURING THE PERIOD. AND WITH GREAT AFFLUENCE, THERE WERE SMALLER FAMILIES AND MORE LIVING SPACE FOR CHILDREN. ALL THIS PRODUCED THE "GROWING AMERICAN."

SEVERAL DECADES AGO, THOSE AMERICANS WITH ECONOMIC ACCESS TO THE BEST LIVING CONDITIONS HAD ALREADY LEVELLED OFF IN GROWTH. THIS HAS NOW EXTENDED TO THE POPULATION IN GENERAL, OTHER THAN A TINY FRACTION OF THE VERY POOR.

(OPT) AMERICANS HAVE LEVELLED OFF AT THESE MEASUREMENTS: MALE ADULTS AVERAGE A HUNDRED AND SEVENTY-TWO CENTIMETERS IN HEIGHT, SIXTY-EIGHT KILOS IN WEIGHT. WOMEN AVERAGE ONE HUNDRED SIXTY CENTIMETERS AND SIXTY-SIX KILOS. (END OPT)

IT APPEARS FROM THE STUDY THAT ONLY A VARIATION IN ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS WILL CAUSE FURTHER CHANGE. AT THE RECENT UNITED NATIONS HABITAT CONFERENCE IN CANADA, DELEGATES CONCLUDED THAT CITIES SHOW AN INCREASING INABILITY TO MEET FUNDAMENTAL NEEDS OF THEIR POPULATIONS. AMERICANS, HOWEVER, CONTINUE MOVING TO CITIES TO A DEGREE THAT MAKES ONE UNEASY AS TO WHO'S OUT THERE GROWING FOOD. SEVENTY PERCENT OF THE U.S. POPULATION IS NOW URBAN, IN CITIES INCREASINGLY PLAGUED

WITH AIR POLLUTION. CHILDREN IN A HIGHLY INDUSTRIALIZED AREA NEAR NEW YORK CITY HAVE BEEN FOUND TO HAVE LESS THAN NORMAL CAPACITY TO PLAY HARD CHILDREN'S GAMES LIKE BASEBALL. IT WILL BE INTERESTING TO SEE WHAT THE GROWTH CHARTS IN DOCTORS' OFFICES WILL SHOW ABOUT THIS KIND OF THING IN ANOTHER FEW DECADES.

JS/CAK